Key Points . . .

- Despite the negative impact of treatment on day-to-day life, women with breast cancer can have a positive outlook for their futures and adapt to treatment with a good quality of life.
- Time since initial diagnosis of breast cancer and extent of disease at diagnosis both are related to quality of life.
- Survivors of breast cancer estimate their personal life satisfaction as significantly greater than most people and expect their life satisfaction to increase significantly in five years.

United States. A woman in the United States has a 12.5% chance (one in eight) of developing breast cancer in her lifetime (ACS, 2001). Because of advances in early detection and treatment, more and more women survive breast cancer. The five-year survival rate for women after initial diagnosis of localized breast cancer is about 96% (ACS, 2001). If breast cancer spreads regionally, the survival rate after five years is almost 77%. Thus, understanding how women adapt and live with breast cancer is key to helping them cope beyond initial diagnosis and treatment. The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between contextual variables (i.e., time since diagnosis, extent of disease, and type of treatment), emotional state, and quality of life (QOL) in survivors of breast cancer.

Literature Review

Discovering a lump in the breast and the diagnosis of breast cancer inevitably create the potential for extreme concern and stress (Lierman, 1988) that may disrupt QOL. Definitions of QOL are numerous and have been inconsistent in the literature (Farquhar, 1995; King et al., 1997). Experts generally agree that QOL represents a subjective phenomenon that is multidimensional and involves physical, psychological, emotional, social, and spiritual well-being (King et al.). Many measures of QOL assess overall daily functioning.